



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

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Welcome to Navy History Matters—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website (history.navy.mil), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ WWII@75: Marines Land on Iwo Jima

Following preinvasion naval gunfire and aerial bombardment, U.S. Marines landed on Iwo Jima Feb. 19, 1945. During one of the bloodiest battles in U.S. history, 6,871 of approximately 60,000 U.S. servicemembers who took part in the [Battle for Iwo Jima](#) were killed in action, and more than 19,000 were wounded. Of the roughly 21,000 Japanese, only about 200 initially survived the battle, and an estimated 3,000 went into hiding. By August 1945, most of the Japanese in hiding were either killed or captured. [Medals of Honor were awarded to 22 Marines and five Sailors](#), 14 of them posthumously. Adm. [Chester W. Nimitz](#), commander of Pacific Fleet, noted after the battle, "...uncommon valor was a common virtue." For more, [read the essay](#) by NHHC's Carsten Fries at [NHHC's website](#). Also check out the photo essay, [The Battle for Iwo Jima—A Sailor's View](#), by NHHC's Lisa Crunk, D. Alexander Hays, and Mark A. Nicholas. There is also a blog—[The Sailors of Iwo Jima](#)—that is a compilation of photographs and Sailor stories submitted to NHHC in commemoration of the 75th anniversary.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/usn/usn-47000/usn-48302-landing-craft-on-the-beach-at-iwo-jima.html>

★ WWII@75: Marines Raise U.S. Flag on Mount Suribachi

On the morning of Feb. 23, 1945, four days after landing on [Iwo Jima](#), Marines from the Fifth Marine Division hoisted the U.S. flag after capturing the summit of Mount Suribachi. There were actually two flag raising that morning, but the second one was the one immortalized by Associated Press photographer [Joe Rosenthal](#). The morale-boosting event culminated the Marines' tortuous climb up the rough terrain of the mountain. The photograph was first published in newspapers days later, then reprinted in thousands of publications. Rosenthal eventually won a Pulitzer Prize for it. The image is considered by many as a symbol of victory and heroism, and is one of the most recognizable photos of [World War II](#). On Nov. 10, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower dedicated the [Marine Corps War Memorial](#) in Arlington, VA, that was created from the photograph.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-58000/NH-58330.html>

★ Happy 225th Birthday, U.S. Navy Supply Corps

The U.S. Navy Supply Corps traces its history to February 1795, when Philadelphia businessman Tench Francis Jr. became the first Purveyor of Public Supplies, overseeing Navy purchasing. One of his initial tasks was to ensure timbers and supplies were available for the construction of six new frigates authorized by the [Naval Act of 1794](#). Since that time, many men and women have taken on the role of making sure the Navy gets what it needs, including not just Supply Corps officers, but Sailors in the enlisted supply community and civilians. Today, there are more than 3,300 Active and Reserve component naval officers—from warrant to flag officer—who proudly wear the oak leaf identifying them as leaders in the world's preeminent naval logistics force. Supply Corps officers serve on nearly every afloat platform, in almost every expeditionary environment, and at hundreds of [shore installations](#) worldwide. One third of Supply Corps officers serve in operational assignments, making them the most operational of all Navy staff corps. For more, check out the new [Supply Corps](#) page at [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/browse-by-topic/communities/supply-corps.html>

★ **Brenda Robinson: Navy's First African-American Female Pilot to Earn Her Wings**

Now in retirement after 45 years of flying, Brenda Robinson said when she was growing up in the 1950s outside Philadelphia that physically flying a plane was not something that crossed her mind. She thought being a woman in aeronautics meant being a flight attendant, but thanks to a career study program at Dowling College in New York, she was able to broaden her view of [aviation](#). Robinson was the first black woman in the college's history to graduate with a degree in aeronautics. She also earned a pilot's license. In 1977, just one year after women were authorized to attend the U.S. Naval Academy, she joined the Navy. "At the time, they were selecting 10 women a year out of the nation, and I was one of those 10." In 1980, Robinson became the first [African-American](#) female pilot to earn her wings in the U.S. Navy. For more, [read the article](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.wcnc.com/article/life/holidays/black-history-month/brenda-robinson-navys-first-african-american-female-pilot-earn-wings/275-7229c3ba-1ae0-41e8-be34-1392f53242de>

★ **Amidst the Timbers of a Storied Past: Nautical Archaeologists Visit *Constitution***

In early January 2020, Benjamin Ioset and fellow archaeologists gathered in Boston, MA, for the 2020 Society for Historical Archaeology meetings. The meetings provided an opportunity for the group to visit [USS Constitution](#). Earlier, Ioset and a colleague approached Alexis Catsambis of NHHC's [Underwater Archaeology Branch](#) about arranging an extended tour, as many of the most extraordinary aspects of *Constitution's* construction are beyond the typical tour. As a nautical archaeologist, Ioset studies maritime history and societies through the remains of ships, shipbuilding methods, and communities. "*Constitution* is a remarkable floating example of how ships form a microcosm of the societies, which built, maintain and sailed them," noted Ioset. "*Constitution* is importantly a reflection of the fledgling years of the United States." For more, [read the blog](#) by Ioset at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2020/02/11/amidst-the-timbers-of-a-storied-past-nautical-archaeologists-visit-constitution/>

★ **The 10,000-Day War: Telling the Story of the Navy during the Vietnam War**

In the [latest naval history podcast](#) from Preble Hall, [Hampton Roads Naval Museum](#) Director John Pentangelo and Director of Education Laura Orr discuss the U.S. Navy during the [Vietnam War](#) and the special exhibit currently on display at the HRNM. The exhibit, "[The Ten Thousand-Day War at Sea: The U.S. Navy in Vietnam, 1950–1975](#)," explores the missions and contributions of the Navy at sea, on land, and in the skies over Vietnam. The [Preble Hall podcast](#), conducted by personnel at the [United States Naval Academy Museum](#) in Annapolis, MD, interviews historians, practitioners, military personnel, and other experts on a variety of naval history topics from ancient history to more current events.



Photo Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/HRNavalMuseum/photos/pcb.10158147170763216/10158147155683216/?type=3&theater>

★ **Boxer Celebrates 25th Anniversary**

On Feb. 11, Sailors aboard USS *Boxer* celebrated the ship's 25th birthday. "*Boxer* has a long and storied history dating back to the [War of 1812](#)," said Capt. Dale Heinken, commanding officer of the ship. "Today, we're celebrating a quarter-century of service and success." The current *Boxer* is the sixth iteration, and was commissioned on Feb. 11, 1995. The ship name *Boxer* has an extensive history in British sea fare with ten ships bearing the name. The U.S. Navy began its own history of the ship name when [Enterprise](#) captured HMS *Boxer* off the coast of Maine on Sept. 5, 1813. However, the first official *Boxer* was a brig commissioned in 1815. "The men and women that have served and continue to serve aboard are directly responsible for the legacy of success *Boxer* has enjoyed," Heinken said. "Today, together, we celebrate our history and look forward to many more years of serving with honor, courage, and strength." For more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/191119-N-HD110-1353.JPG>

★ One of Last Three Remaining Survivors of USS Arizona Attack Dies at 97

Donald Stratton, a Sailor who survived the attack on [USS Arizona](#), passed away at his home in Colorado Springs, CO, Feb. 15. As *USS Arizona* was in flames on Dec. 7, 1941, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Stratton and others were able to escape when Chief Petty Officer Joe George threw them a lifeline from his ship moored next to *Arizona*. Stratton, co-author of *All the Gallant Men: An American Sailor's Firsthand Account of Pearl Harbor*, wrote that George was possibly the only reason he had survived the attack. After spending nearly a year in the hospital, Stratton convinced the Navy to allow him to reenlist. In 1945, Stratton fought in the [Battle for Okinawa](#). To learn more about the [attack on Pearl Harbor](#), visit [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.stripes.com/news/veterans/donald-stratton-one-of-last-three-remaining-survivors-of-uss-arizona-attack-dies-at-97-1.619012>

★ As Pearl Harbor Was Attacked, a Navy Band Finished the “Star-Spangled Banner”

On Dec. 7, 1941, at [Pearl Harbor](#), bandleader Oden McMillan and his 23 musicians were in position on [USS Nevada](#) to play the “Star Spangled Banner” as they had done every morning. When the clock hit 8 a.m., McMillan struck up the band, and that is when they noticed something strange. As hundreds of planes began to appear over the horizon, the band thought at first it was just another exercise. Astern of [USS Arizona](#), *Nevada* was a favorite target for the Japanese, which dropped bombs on *Arizona* and repeatedly strafed *Nevada's* decks. Yet the band played on. The band finished the national anthem and then ran for cover. A scene in the classic [World War II](#) film *Tora! Tora! Tora!* immortalized the event. For more, [read the article](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-navy-ships/battleships/nevada-bb-36/80-G-19940.html>

★ Graveyard Ceremony Commemorates Russia's Role during the Civil War

Just down the road from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD, is the grave of Nikolay Demidoff, a Russian Sailor who died on U.S. soil more than 150 years ago. Recently, a contingent from the Embassy of the Russian Federation and other Russian citizens gathered near Demidoff's grave to commemorate an incident that occurred when Russia and Washington were the closest of allies. During the American [Civil War](#) in 1864, most of Europe—though sympathetic to the Confederacy—vowed neutrality. France and Great Britain, however, relied on cotton from the South, and there were fears they would support the rebels with their militaries. Demidoff was in the United States with two squadrons dispatched to demonstrate Russia's support for the Union. On Jan. 29, 1864, steam corvette *Variag* and steam clipper *Almaz* sailed up the Severn River and dropped anchor near the academy. To learn what happened next, [read the article](#) at USNI News.



Photo Link: <https://news.usni.org/2020/02/12/graveyard-ceremony-commemorates-when-u-s-russia-were-the-closest-of-allies>

★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

In commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the [Battle for Iwo Jima](#), this week's Webpage of the Week is the DANFS entry [LST-779](#), authored by NHHC historian Christopher B. Havern. On Feb. 19, 1945, LST-779 arrived at dawn off Iwo Jima, and the ship lay off the coast while initial waves of Marines landed in smaller craft. On the afternoon of Feb. 20, LST-779 moved close to the beach, launched amphibious vessels, and then beached and began unloading. By Feb. 21, Marines unloaded all the heavy artillery, and the ship withdrew. On Feb. 23, LST-779 was ordered to beach again and unload the remainder of her cargo. News that day reported Marines had taken Mount Suribachi and erected an American flag. The battalion commander deemed the flag too small to be visible to Marines fighting on the island and ordered a lieutenant to procure a larger flag. He acquired larger colors from LST-779 and entrusted the flag to the battalion commander's runner to carry it to the top of Mount Suribachi. It was the flag in the [iconic Joe Rosenthal photo](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/l/lst-779.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On Feb. 18, 1942, [USS Truxtun](#) and [USS Pollux](#) were sunk during a heavy storm off St. Lawrence Harbor, Newfoundland—at Chambers Cove and Laun's Point respectively—with the loss of more than 200 lives. Heroic efforts to haul lines ashore failed due to the inability to handle them when they became oil-soaked. Some of the crew attempted to swim ashore, many unsuccessfully. Finally, lines with a boatswain's chair were rigged to a ledge, and the remaining personnel were conveyed ashore. *Truxtun* broke up almost immediately after grounding, and soon after *Pollux* did as well. The more than 180 survivors owed their rescue in large part to the tireless, and in many cases, heroic actions of the people of St. Lawrence. For more on [weather-related incidents](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHC's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.

Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-86000/NH-86970.html>